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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000403

DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/RA, AND SCA/A
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SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S AFGHAN FOOD AID REVEALS PROBLEMS

REF: 08 Kabul 3222

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) In 2008, the USG responded to both the United Nations (UN) World Food Program's (WFP) on-going Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) in Afghanistan and two separate food appeals in January and July. Both efforts were successful. USG provided 157,520 metric tons of food commodities with a value of \$162 million, which accounted for 66 percent of the overall total. There are no reports of widespread food shortages or incidents of starvation.

12. (SBU) A USAID contractor assessment of the (WFP) distribution in three Afghan provinces has revealed WFP aid distributed in Ghazni, Badghis, and Ghor reached only 40, 52 and 90 percent respectively of the target recipients. USAID and ECON have presented the findings to Kabul-based WFP Country Director Stefano Porretti, who acknowledged that WFP had concerns about the transparency and distribution within the program. USG will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation. End Summary

DISTRIBUTION

13. (SBU) After a three-week, rapid survey (including visits to seven villages and interviews with recipients) the USAID contractor, FEWSNET, reported that:

- Not all recipients have received their full food allotment.
- The Food for Schools program seems to be doing better than Food for Work program in getting food to recipients, presumably because parents and students have a better understanding of the amounts they are supposed to receive.
- Record keeping between WFP and its Afghan Government implementing partners is poor, making it impossible for a limited survey to determine the extent of the problem.
- Security makes it difficult to deliver food and monitor food deliveries in many parts of the country.
- WFP is getting and tracking food to the provincial level where it is turned over to its local implementing partners. The major

problems begin with these secondary deliveries.

¶4. (SBU) As a result of these issues, USAID is commissioning FEWSNET to do a fuller, nationwide survey to give the Mission a clearer understanding of the WFP food delivery program, the extent of leakage in the program, and what can be done to fix it.

DETAILS OF ASSESSMENT: FOOD FOR WORK

¶5. (SBU) FEWSNET presented its findings to USAID Deputy Director, USAID FFP Officer, and Deputy Economic Counselor, outlining WFP distribution activities in the three provinces, broken down by Food For Work (FFW), Food For Schools (FFS), and Food For Training (FFT).

According to the data, the FFW program had the largest delta between allocation and actual distribution of aid. FEWSNET presenter suggested that the reason for this was a lack of community awareness among FFW recipients. The work undertaken by FFW recipients is often maintenance of canals, roads, etc. that takes place regardless of WFP aid. In addition, the projects do not originate from the communities themselves; rather, they are directed by the District Development Assembly or provincial governors. FFW recipients allege that the food aid is misappropriated at those decision making levels.

FOOD FOR SCHOOLS

¶6. (SBU) According to FEWSNET, FFS distributions are more reliable. There are fewer chances for misuse because recipients know how much food they should be receiving. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the program that can be exploited by misuse. WFP transports FFS only to district centers. As most schools themselves are located some distance from the delivery points, there is no oversight of

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distribution at the schools.

WFP RESPONSE

¶7. (SBU) USAID and ECON brought these points to WFP's Porretti, who acknowledged that the current WFP distribution paradigm is far from perfect. Porretti agreed to develop data on how FFW and FFS aid is allocated between the Afghan government and NGOs. Interestingly, he said that current WFP data suggest that the FFW program is more effective than FFS, precisely the opposite of the FEWSNET finding. USAID Deputy Mission Director underscored that regardless of which program was "better," WFP tracking and monitoring was weak and unacceptable and eventually would lead of a re-evaluation of the WFP. Porretti agreed and promised to work on a mechanism that would reduce the delta between allocated aid and that received by beneficiaries.

NEXT STEPS

¶8. (SBU) WFP distribution issues described above need to be further evaluated. USAID will continue to engage with WFP to improve record keeping and the distribution system. USAID will augment the food security staff at the Mission.

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